



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

# PRESS RELEASE

## Winners of the 2018 United Nations Human Rights Prize

**25 October, United Nations, New York** - The President of the UN General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, is delighted to announce the 2018 winners of the prestigious United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights. They are:

**Ms. Rebeca Gyumi - activist for the rights of women and girls (Tanzania)**

**Ms. Asma Jahangir (posthumously) - human rights lawyer (Pakistan)**

**Ms. Joênia Wapichana (Joênia Batista de Carvalho) – activist for the rights of indigenous communities (Brazil)**

**Front Line Defenders – organization advocating and working for the protection of human rights defenders (Ireland)**

The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights is an honorary award given to individuals and organizations in recognition of outstanding achievement in human rights.

It provides an opportunity to give public recognition to the achievements of the recipients themselves and to send a clear message to human rights defenders all over the world that the international community is grateful for, and supports, their efforts to promote all human rights for all.

Previous winners have included Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, Denis Mukwege, Malala Yousafzai, Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The Prize, established by the General Assembly in 1966 ([A/RES/21/2217](#)), was awarded for the first time in 1968 on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on what is now known as Human Rights Day, 10 December.

This is the tenth award of the prize, coinciding this year with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Prize winners are chosen by a special committee comprising of the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the Human Rights Council, the Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Chair of the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council, as mandated by the UN General Assembly. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provides support to the special committee.

Over 300 nominations were received for this year's Prize from a broad variety of sources including Member States, UN organizations and civil society.

The award ceremony for the 2018 Prize will take place at UN Headquarters in New York in December 2018, as part of activities to commemorate Human Rights Day. The date of the ceremony will be announced nearer the time.

Further details on the 2018 Human Rights Prize Winners:

**Ms. Rebeca Gyumi - activist for the rights of women and girls (Tanzania)**

Rebeca Z. Gyumi is a Founder & Executive Director at Msichana Initiative, a Tanzanian civil society organization which aims to empower girls through education and addresses challenges which limit girls' right to education. She has worked for over 8 years with an organization working on youth, as a TV personality and youth advocate. Ms. Gyumi challenged the constitutionality of section 13 and 17 of The Law of Marriage Act of 1971 that allowed girls to marry at the age of 14 and 15 where there is parental consent or court's sanction. She won the case before the High Court of Tanzania in 2016.

**Ms. Asma Jahangir (posthumously) - human rights lawyer (Pakistan)**

Asma Jahangir (1952-2018) was Pakistan's leading human rights lawyer. For three decades, she defended the rights of women, children, religious minorities and the poor. Having founded the first legal aid centre in Pakistan in 1986, Ms. Jahangir courageously took on and won very complicated cases. She has been threatened, assaulted in public and placed under house arrest for defending human rights. She was elected as the first female President of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan and co-founded and was the first Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Ms. Jahangir has also served as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, arbitrary or summary executions, then as the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and subsequently as the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Ms. Joênia Wapichana (Joênia Batista de Carvalho) – activist for the rights of indigenous communities (Brazil)**

Joênia Wapichana (officially Joênia Batista de Carvalho) is the first woman indigenous lawyer in Brazil and a member of the Wapichana tribe of northern Brazil. After taking a land dispute to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Ms. Wapichana became the first indigenous lawyer to appear before the Supreme Court of Brazil. In 2013, she was appointed as the first president of the National Commission for the Defense of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

**Front Line Defenders – organization advocating and working for the protection of human rights defenders (Ireland)**

Front Line Defenders or The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders is a human rights organization founded in Dublin, Ireland in 2001, to protect human rights defenders at risk. The organization works to address the protection needs identified by defenders themselves and to enable them to continue their work without the risk of harassment, intimidation or arrest.

*For more information including on how to attend the award ceremony in December 2018, please contact: Mr. Nenad Vasić, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, at 212 963 5998, vasic@un.org.*